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[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 7758

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJ: DISAPPEARANCE OF CHILDREN

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full

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SUMMARY. MEMBERS OF A "GRANDMOTHERS GROUP" HERE IN BUENOS AIRES HAVE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE FATE OF CHILDREN BORN TO THEIR PREGNANT DAUGHTERS AND DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW WHO SOME TIME AGO WERE TAKEN BY SECURITY FORCES. WE KNOW TOO THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES TEENAGERS ARE CAPABLE OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY AND THERE HAVE BEEN TEENAGE ARRESTS. WE BELIEVE IT WAS THESE ELEMENTS WHICH SPARKED THE STATEMENTS ABOUT "DISAPPEARED CHILDREN" REPORTED REFTEL. END SUMMARY.

1. A NEW GROUP, CALLED LOCALLY THE "GRANDMOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO," HAS ATTRACTED RECENT ATTENTION IN BUENOS AIRES. THIS GROUP OF 17 GRANDMOTHERS RAN AN ADVERTISE-
MENT AUGUST FIFTH IN LA PRENSA CALLING FOR HELP IN LOCATING THE CHILDREN BORN TO THEIR DISAPPEARED PREGNANT DAUGHTERS AND DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW. THESE DISAPPEARANCES DATE FROM SOME TIME AGO. THIS GROUP CALLED ON THE EMBASSY LATER IN AUGUST AND PRESENTED A LIST OF 16 MISSING GRANDCHILDREN.

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2. FROM THOSE LADIES AND OTHER SOURCES WE HAVE LEARNED OF A FEW CASES OF "DISAPPEARED" MOTHERS

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IN WHICH CHILDREN BORN TO THEM WERE RETURNED TO RELATIVES. ONE CASE REPORTED TO THE EMBASSY, BUT NOT CONFIRMED, WAS THAT OF GRANDPARENTS WHO, THROUGH A TIPOFF, DISCOVERED A GRANDCHILD IN A GOVERNMENT PHILANTHROPIC CARE CENTER WHO WAS BEING OFFERED FOR ADOPTION. THE " PLAZA DE MAYO" GRANDMOTHERS FEAR ALSO, AND FREQUENTLY STATE THIS FEAR, THAT THEIR GRANDCHILDREN HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM THEIR MOTHERS AND "GIVEN AWAY" TO POLICE AND MILITARY OFFICIALS. TO OUR QUESTION WHETHER IN ARGENTINA THERE IS A DEMAND FOR ADOPTABLE BABIES THEY REPLY THAT THE STRENGTH OF THE DEMAND IS ANOTHER REASON FOR BELIEVING THE RUMORS THEY HAVE HEARD. WE HAVE NOT FOUND MEANS OF CHECKING THESE ALLEGATIONS FURTHER.

3. IN THE CASE OF SMALL CHILDREN, THE OBSERVED GENERAL PRACTICE OF ANTI-SUBVERSIVE OPERATIONS HAS BEEN TO LEAVE THEM WITH NEIGHBORS OR BUILDING SUPERINTENDENTS DURING AN OPERATION IN WHICH BOTH PARENTS ARE ABDUCTED. A NUMBER OF THESE INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED TO US HOWEVER, THERE ARE ALSO CASES REPORTED WHERE CHILDREN ARE TAKEN WITH THEIR PARENTS. THESE YOUNGSTERS ARE LATER TURNED OVER TO GRANDPARENTS OR CLOSE RELATIVES FOR CARE. SPECULATION IS THAT THE TAKING OF THE YOUNG CHILDREN IN THESE CASES IS PROBABLY DONE TO FACILITATE THE PEACEFUL COMPLIANCE OF THE PARENTS WITH THE "ARREST PROCEDURE". THE BEST DOCUMENTED OF THESE CASES IS THAT OF MRS. N.A. SOSA DE FORT; WHO ON FEBRUARY 18, 1977 WAS TAKEN FROM A PLANE AT EZEIZA AIRPORT ALONG WITH HER FIVE CHILDREN,
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AGED 8 TO 16. AFTER SEVERAL DAYS THE CHILDREN WERE RELEASED IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF THEIR GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE. THEY LATER JOINED THEIR FATHER IN VENEZUELA.

4. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF CASES REPORTED OF DISAPPEARED TEENAGERS. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE PAST STATED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT OPERATIONS CANNOT BE LIMITED ON THE BASIS OF AGE AS THE IMPRESSIONABLE TEENAGE GROUP IS A FERTILE AREA FOR TERRORISTS AND SUBVERSIVE PENETRATION. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OFTEN CITE THE CASE OF THE TEENAGE GIRL WHO PLANTED A BOMB UNDER THE BED OF A FORMER FEDERAL POLICE CHIEF KILLING HIM AND

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HIS WIFE.

5. OPERATIONS AGAINST TEENAGERS BELOW 18 ARE, HOWEVER, RARE WE BELIEVE. OPERATIONS AGAINST 18 AND 19 YEAR OLD STUDENTS HAVE NOT BEEN UNCOMMON HOWEVER. WE BELIEVE THAT AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF OPERATIONS, THOSE RUN AGAINST TEENAGERS IS SMALL, BUT THESE CASES DRAW CONSIDERABLY MORE OUTCRY AND PUBLICITY.

6. EMBASSY HAS NOT DONE ANY ANALYSIS OF DISAPPEARANCE AND DETENTION STATISTICS BY AGE GROUPS. HOWEVER, ONE LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP "FAMILY MEMBERS OF DISAPPEARED AND DETAINED PERSONS," DID A DISTRIBUTION GRAPH LAST YEAR OF THE 900 PLUS DISAPPEARANCE CASES REPORTED TO THAT ORGANIZATION. THE GRAPH INDICATED THAT THE MEDIAN AGE OF THE REPORTED DISAPPEARANCE CASES WAS IN THE EARLY 20'S. ONLY A FEW CASES WERE REGISTERED OF PERSONS UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE.
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